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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - DECEMBER 4

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) MONUC told Goma poloff on December 3 that the FDLR appears to be moving into some areas that the CNDP has vacated, but that forces from the two groups also appear to be trying to avoid engaging in direct clashes. In addition, there are rumors that CNDP elements are infiltrating Goma, but MONUC cannot confirm these rumors.

¶3. (SBU) The consensus among MONUC sources in Goma is that the reason for recent CNDP pull-backs is that the group cannot afford to overextend its lines of communication and supply. They probe where resistance is low, but their recent withdrawals are due to their own weaknesses rather than any diplomatic or political considerations, such as promises to Obasanjo.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC still believes that the CNDP has designs on Masisi and Walikale to garner the additional political gains coming from the control over major centers. Nevertheless, they want to maintain an image of strength for the moment and not engage in a battle that might expose how thin their forces are on the ground.

¶5. (SBU) MONUC expressed concern at a December 4 meeting about a large buildup of CNDP soldiers in the Kibumba area. Numerous skirmishes between CNDP and Mai-Mai/FDLR/PARECO on December 3 were reported as well, in addition to the looting of 20 homes in Kiwanja, with CNDP elements as the primary suspects.

Political Developments

¶6. (U) Press reporting notes that the CNDP is ready to meet with North Kivu Governor Julien Paluku for "information contacts." Paluku had publicly announced his willingness to talk with the CNDP, but Kinshasa has not provided him with a mandate to negotiate with the group on behalf of the national government. (Note: There is no indication that the CNDP's reported willingness to meet with Paluku will override its demand for direct talks with national government representatives. End note)

¶7. (U) Additionally, prospects for the introduction of a European military force into the DRC appear dim following public remarks by Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht and the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy Javier Solana playing down the possibility of such an intervention.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: While the CNDP does have major weaknesses and requires reinforcements to extend beyond its core holdings, we believe that the MONUC analysis of the CNDP's intentions mistakenly

assumes a strategy based on conventional military goals. The CNDP is pursuing a multi-track campaign to achieve its overall goal of consolidating political power based on public relations outreach, political pressure, revenue streams through taxation, and indirect military pressure (such as by control of roads). It uses existing structures for dialogue with the international community, including the latest structure, the Obasanjo process, as a way to buy extra time to carry out these activities to consolidate power. Capturing and controlling major population centers, while part of the overall strategy, does not seem to be the main focus. End comment.

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